

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-15

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 EB-08 TRSE-00 OMB-01 AID-05

OPIC-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 /091 W

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R 081911Z SEP 78

FM AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3943

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 3883

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, SHUM, EAID, PA

SUBJECT: MORE MIXED SIGNALS FROM GOP

REF: A. ASUNCION 3804; B. ASUNCION 3754; C. STATE 211450; D. ASUNCION 3864; E. ASUNCION 3865

SUMMARY: CONFUSION STILL SURROUNDS GOP REACTION TO POSITIVE ACTIONS EMBASSY HAS TAKEN IN RESPONSE TO REF C, AS REPORTED IN PRELIMINARY FASHION IN REF A, BUT BALANCE SEEMS TO BE SHIFTING AWAY FROM PERCEPTION

WE HOPED FOR AND TOWARD REINFORCEMENT OF REGIME'S WORST TENDENCIES TALK IN OFFICIAL CIRCLES IS THAT USG HAS FINALLY SEEN LIGHT AND IS BACKING OFF HARD LINE TOWARD LA DICTATORSHIPS IN DEFENSE OF HUMANRIGHTS.

LESS AND LESS IS HEARD OF "EVENTUAL" IAHRC VISIT. THREATS TO EX-POLITICAL PRISONER BOGADO GONDRA TO CHOOSE EXILE WITHIN EIGHT DAYS OR ELSE AND TO EX-DETAINEE LAINO THAT HE MIGHT BE EXPELLED (REFS D AND E)

,
DETENTION AND THREATS TO CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENT ANIBAL RECALDE AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC AND FEBRERISTA LEADERS, POLICE CITATION GIVEN CARMEN DE LARA CASTRO SEPTEMBER 2 (SHE WAS QUIZZED FOR TWO HOURS ON HER CONNECTION WITH CURRENT HUNGER STRIKE) AND OFFICIAL COVER-UP OF FACTS IN GRANDEL MURDER CASE ALL POINT IN WRONG DIRECTION AND ARE DISTURBING. GOP WARNINGS ARE CLEARLY
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AIMED AT PREVENTING FORMATION OF BROAD OPPOSITION FRONT OF LIBERAL FACTIONS, FEBRERISTAS AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. CONTINUED RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS IS SOMEWHAT ENCOURAGING. EMBASSY BELIEVES USG SHOULD PROCEED WITH STEPS ALREADY ANNOUNCED AND VOTE IN FAVOR OF NEW IDB LOAN REQUEST (ASUNCION 3812) BUT USE EVERY CHANNEL TO ALERT GOP THAT OUR RESOLVE HAS NOT SLACKENED. END SUMMARY.

1. CLEAR PICTURE OF WHERE OUR RELATIONS WITH GOP ARE GOING HAS NOT YET EMERGED, IN EMBASSY'S OPINION, BUT LAST WEEK HAS PRODUCED A SERIES OF SIGNALS THAT AROUSE CONCERN ABOUT IMPACT OF OUR EFFORTS TO IMPROVE CLIMATE. NEWS THAT INTERIOR MINISTRY UNDER-SECRETARY BESTARD CALLED IN NEWLY-RELEASED POLITICAL PRISONER BOGADO GONDRA AND TOLD HIM TO GO ABROAD WITH EIGHT DAYS... NOT SPECIFYING WHAT WOULD FOLLOW IF HE STAYED AND THREAT OF EXPULSION TO EX-DETAINEE LAINO REPRESENT NEW GOP TACTIC. THIS IS ILLEGAL PROCEDURE AS PARAGUAYAN LAW DOES NOT PROVIDE FOR ENFORCED EXILE; IT IS ALSO IN CONFLICT WITH AMERICAN DECLARATION ON RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF MAN; IT IS CERTAIN TO ELICIT STRONG CRITICISM IN EUROPE AND DEMOCRATIC WESTERN HEMISPHERE STATES. TO FORCE CITIZENS INTO EXILE WILL EXPOSE GOP TO NEW CHARGES OF TRAMPLING HUMAN RIGHTS AND RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR DECISION TO RESPOND POSITIVELY TO WHAT LOOKED LIKE AN IMPROVING HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION

2. ANOTHER SERIOUS CASE OF BACKSLIDING IS SEEN IN GOVERNMENT'S COVER-UP OF BACKGROUND TO DOROTEO GRANDELL MURDER (ASUNCION 3789) IN WHICH OFFICIAL COLORADO NEWSPAPER AND SENIOR MILITARY LEVELS ARE ACTIVELY PARTICIPATING. DECISION TO MURDER GRANDELL MAY NOT HAVE BEEN MADE AT TOP OF GOP BUT EFFORTS TO ASSERT NONSENSE ABOUT CASE AND REFUSAL TO PURSUE WELL-IDENTIFIED MURDERERS RAISES SERIOUS QUESTIONS ABOUT GOP'S BONA FIDES IN PROJECTING BETTER HUMAN RIGHTS IMAGE. WITH SPOTLIGHT SHIFTED ELSEWHERE AND PERCEP-
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TION SPREADING THAT USG IS BACKING OFF FIRM DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS HERE, GOP MAY BE TAKING OPPORTUNITY TO SETTLE A FEW OLD SCORES.

3. CONVERSATIONS WITH A WIDE RANGE OF SOURCES, IN OFFICIAL CIRCLES--MILITARY AND CIVILIAN--AS WELL AS IN OPPOSITION, REINFORCE OUR IMPRESSION DISCUSSED IN REF A THAT ANNOUNCEMENT OF U.S. SHIFT ON IDB/AID FRONT HAVE BEEN READ AS BACKING DOWN, PERHAPS EVEN AS INDICATION WE NO LONGER CARE AND THAT IAHRC VISIT NO LONGER HAS MUCH PRIORITY FOR US. WITHOUT INSISTING ON EARLY IAHRC VISIT, WHICH IS REAL ONVERSATION-STOPPER WITH GOVERNMENT STALWARTS, WE HAVE ATTEMPTED AT EVERY LEVEL TO CONVEY MESSAGE THAT POSITIVE U.S. ACTIONS ARE RESPONSE TO IMPROVEMENTS TO DATE AND FURTHER SUCH ACTIONS HINGE ON FURTHER PROGRESS. ATTITUDE OF MANY IN GOP SEEMS TO BE THAT USG HAS FINALLY SEEN THE LIGHT, MAYBE AS A RESULT OF NICARAGUAN CONFLAGRATION, AND THIER RECENT ACTIONS SUGGEST THEY MAY EVEN HAVE GAINED IMPRES-
SION WE WILL NOW LOOK THE OTHER WAY WHICLE GOP CRACKS DOWN ON OPPOSITION. THAT HEAT IS OFF ON IAHRC VISIT SEEMS TO BE CONCLUSION DRAWN BY MANY, PARTICULARLY IN THE MILITARY.

4. MEANTIME, THE ONLY EVIDENCE OF IMPROVEMENT WE SEE IS

RELEASE OF MORE POLITICAL PRISONERS AND CAUTIOUS ATTITUDE
GOVERNMENT IS TAKING TOWARD SUPPORTERS OF HUNGER STRIKE
(EVEN PEREMPTORY CITATION OF CARMEN DE LARA CASTRO TO
APPEAR AT POLICE STATION FOR QUESTIONING IS MILD MEASURE BY
USUAL PARAGUAYAN STANDARDS). FACT A NUMBER OF OTHER
HUMAN RIGHTS AND POLITICAL PARTY FIGURES HAVE BEEN CALLED
IN BY POLICE THIS WEEK FOR FRIENDLY WARNINGS, THAT COLORADO
PARTY NEWSPAPER IS WARNING OPPOSITION AGAINST FORMING BROAD
FRONT, THAT GOP MANIPULATING TO REMOVE ACTIVELY OPPOSITIONIST
ELEMENTS FROM LEADERSHIP OF OFFICIALLY-RECOGNIZED RADICAL
LIBERAL LEADERSHIP PLUS PRESIDENT STROESSNER'S EXHORTATION
TO POLICE TO STOP ACTING WEAK TOWARD OPPOSITION, AND THAT ANTI-
STROESSNER NEWSPAPERS HAVE BEEN THREATENED WITH CLOSURE ALL
WEIGH IN DIRECTION OF REGRESSION TO EARLIER INTIMIDATION
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TACTICS BUT ELEMENT OF TERROR IS SO FAR MISSING. IF SHOULD
ALSO BE POINTED OUT THAT GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ARE USING PRESS
REPRINTS OF OUR RESUMPTION OF ASSISTANCE TO CONVINCE OPPOSITION
AND POLITICAL PRISONERS THAT NOW THEY ARE ALONE IN RESISTING
GOP PRESSURES.
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